

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EUR-12 /068 W
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R 101142Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6777
INFO AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0628

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP MP SE PINT
SUBJECT: BERENGER VISIT TO SEYCHELLES

REF: (A) STATE 134251 (B) PORT LOUIS 624

1. PRESS COVERAGE OF SEYCHELLES EVENTS HAS OF COURSE BEEN VERY HEAVY HERE, IN ALL PAPERS, BASED ALMOST ENTIRELY ON AFP AND REUTERS FILES. PUBLIC REACTION TO COUP BY GOM AND OPPOSITION MMM REPORTED IN PARAS 8 THROUGH 11 OF REF B.

2. BERENGER'S STOP IN THE SYECHELLES HAS OF COURES BEEN WELL-COVERED HERE, GENERALLY BY REPLAYING OF AFP ITEM IN REF A. BUT IT HAS CAUSED VERY LITTLE COMMENT. FLIGHT BERENGER TOOK TO LONDON (BA) MAKES REGULAR STOP IN SEYCHELLES AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MOST UNUSUAL FOR BERENGER NOT TO USE OCCASION TO SAY HELLO TO HIS FRIEND RENE. NOT KNOWN IF BERENGER HAD ALREADY, PRIOR TO COUP, PLANNED TO TAKE THIS FLIGHT TO LONDON TO BEGIN HIS TRIP ABROAD, BUT IT SEEMS PROBABLE. IN ANY CASE, AS REPORTED REF B, BERENGER, LE MILITANT AND MMM IN GENERAL HAVE PUBLICLY DECLARED THEIR ENTHUSIAM FOR RENE'S TAKEOVER, SO BERENGER'S STOP IN SEYCHELLES IS VIEWED HERE AS SIMPLY CONSISTENT AND EXPECTED
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BEHAVIOR. THOSE MAURITIANS WHO FEAR AND DETEST BERENGER-- AND THEY ARE NUMEROUS -- WILL SEE SINISTER MOTIVES AND DESIGNS IN HIS VISIT WITH RENE, BUT THEY WOULD SEE THESE WHETHER HE HAD GONE THERE OR NOT. BELIEVE JESSERAMSING IS OVERESTIMATING MAGNITUDE OF REACTION HERE TO BERENGER'S "MISTAKE."

3. LE CERNEEN OF JUNE 9 REPEATED PART OF INTERVIEW WITH

MAVERICK MMM DEPUTY HARRIS RAMPHUL GIVEN TO REUNION PAPER (HE IS THERE "RESTING" FROM POLITICAL WARS INSIDE MMM WHICH HAVE RECENTLY CENTERED ON HIM). RAMPHUL SAID: "THE RUSSIANS WISH ABSOLUTELY TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR POSITIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND IN AFRICA. FROM WHAT I HAVE SEEN IN THE NEWSPAPERS AND THE STATEMENT IN LONDON BY MR. MANCHAM, THE RUSSIANS WOULD CERTAINLY BE BEHIND THIS COUP D'ETAT IN THE SEYCHELLES. I DON'T SEE ANYTHING SURPRISING IN THAT, SINCE ALBERT RENE IS A COMMUNIST. IN THE MMM WE WERE VERY CLOSE TO ALBERT RENE. BUT AFTER WHAT HAS JUST HAPPENED IN THE SEYCHELLES, IT IS PROBABLE THAT WE'LL TAKE OUR DISTANCE."

4. THE ABOVE CAUSED DE L'ESTRAC, ACTING SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MMM IN BERENGER'S ABSENCE, TO DECLARE IN LE MILITANT OF TODAY THAT RAMPHUL IS OBVOUUSLY POORLY INFORMED ABOUT THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE SYECHELLES. "OUR OWN KNOWLEDGE OF THE POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF THE SPUP PERMITS US TO AFFIRM THE COMMITMENT OF THE SYECHELLES' PRESIDENT TO THE PRINCIPLES OF NON-ALIGNMENT IN FOREIGN POLICY." DE L'ESTRAC SAID RAMPHUL HAD SUCCUMBED TO THE NAIVE REFLEX OF THOSE WHO SEE EITHER THE KGB OR THE CIA BEHIND EVERY COUP D'ETAT, WHICH IS OFTEN ACTUALLY THE "LEGITIMATE REACTION OF WOUNDED PEOPLE." KEELEY

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